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Safety Agency Finds Working for the C.I.A. Is a Hazardous Job

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WASHINGTON, May 3—The spy who comes in from the cold may find unexpected dangers at the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency, in Langley, Va.

There and at other undisclosed agency locations, even intrepid veterans of espionage could find themselves unknowingly gassed by carbon tetrachloride fumes, crisped by a mislabeled electrical switch, or sent plummeting down a flight of stairs after groping for a handrail that should have been there.

These and other "unsafe and unhealthful" conditions were discovered last year by the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration and were included in a report evaluating the C.I.A.'s occupational safety and health program.

Nader Group Gets Report

The report, part of a continuing effort by the safety administration to monitor Federal agencies' health and safety conditions, was made available to The New York Times by Ralph Nader's Public Citizen Health Research Group. The group obtained it from the safety agency under the Freedom of Information Act.

Like hundreds of businessmen who receive frequent health and safety complaints from the safety administration, Adm. Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, responded first by citing the agency's "active safety and health program" and its "dedicated" safety and health officers "who are constantly striving to improve both themselves and the program."

In a two-page letter to Labor Secretary Ray Marshall dated April 20, Admiral Turner maintained that the agency was "steadily raising the level of expertise of our safety and health officers but inadequacies still exist." He added that the agency's primary inadequacy was its lack of an industrial hygienist, but said that one had been "identified" who, "upon completion of her security processing, will be added to the safety staff."

Safety Seen Low Priority

Federal employees are exempted from the Occupational Safety and Health Act, but the law requires Federal agencies to establish and uphold

safety and health programs consistent with the safety administration's standards.

The report states, however, that the C.I.A. interpreted these requirements as "nonmandatory." Instead of concentrating on employee hazards, the report says, the C.I.A.'s safety personnel spend their time on "collateral duties" such as "bomb disposal," "letter bomb training" and "checking of C.I.A. personnel for classified documents," and give "little attention to the potentially serious exposures to toxic substances."

It maintains that the intelligence agency gives a low priority to safety and health factors. The chief of the C.I.A.'s safety branch, the report says, has "long-term experience as a security specialist" rather than as "a qualified occupational safety and health professional."

Asserting that the C.I.A. had made "little progress since the first evaluation," the report said that signs for hazardous work conditions were not posted, annual inspections were not performed, employees were not included in inspections and unsafe work conditions were not being corrected.

"The C.I.A. claims once again that it is beyond the law," said Dr. Sidney M. Wolfe, director of the Health Research Group. "A number of its workers, office people, janitors and maintenance people, have their health and safety jeopardized as a result."

The evaluation by the safety administration was limited to C.I.A. installations in the Washington area because, the report says, "the mission of the agency presents some unique problems in overseas locations."

Besides adding an industrial hygienist to the staff, Admiral Turner said that the C.I.A. would hire an outside consultant service to conduct an "in-depth evaluation of our safety and health program" in an effort to comply with the safety administration's standards.

Joseph M. Snow, who heads the safety administration's division of agency program evaluation, and who reviewed and approved the evaluation of the C.I.A., said he was "pleased" with the C.I.A.'s response.

"Due to its particular mission," he said, "I have found they do as fine a job as possible. In light of the recent shake-ups and turnovers there, I really look forward to them following through on their response."

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